United Nations CCPR/C/MRT/2

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Distr.: General
30 January 2018
English
Original: French
English, French and Spanish only

Human Rights Committee

Second periodic report submitted by Mauritania under article 40 of the Covenant, due in 2017*

[Date received: 22 November 2017]

* The present document has been issued without formal editing.

GE.18-01308 (E) 180618 190618
1801308

Please recycle

Contents

		Page
Introduction		3
Part I. Background and general information		3
A.	Demographic and socioeconomic indicators	3
	1. Demographic indicators	3
	2. Socioeconomic indicators	4
B.	Constitutional and judicial structures	6
	1. Constitutional framework	6
	2. Judicial institutions	6
C.	General framework for the protection and promotion of human rights	9
	1. Acceptance of international human rights norms	9
	2. Scope and nature of reservations	10
	3. Legal framework for the protection of human rights at the national level	14
D.	Factors hampering implementation of international human rights obligations	17
E.	Reporting process	17
F.	Measures to ensure wide dissemination of the concluding observations and recommendations issued by treaty bodies after review of a State party report	17
G.	Follow-up to concluding observations of human rights treaty bodies	18
Part II. Implementation of the Covenant and of the Committee's recommendations pursuant to its review of the initial report		18
Conclusion		33

Introduction

1. The Islamic Republic of Mauritania acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on 17 November 2004 and presented its initial report (CCPR/C/MRT/1) to the Human Rights Committee at the Committee's 3018th and 3019th meetings (CCPR/C/SR.3018 and CCPR/C/SR.3019), held on 21 and 22 October 2013.

2. As a Muslim, Arab and African country, Mauritania is deeply committed to the spirit and letter of the Covenant, which it fully endorses.

3. The present periodic report, submitted pursuant to article 40 of the Covenant, has been prepared in accordance with the Human Rights Committee's guidelines for the preparation of reports.

4. The first part of the report provides a general overview of the country (common core document), while the second part describes how the Committee's recommendations have been acted on and how the Covenant has been implemented.

5. The submission of the report attests to the commitment of Mauritania to fulfil its treaty obligations in the field of human rights and implement the provisions of the Covenant.

6. The Mauritanian Government wishes to avail itself of this opportunity to assure the Committee of its willingness to engage in a constructive, continuous dialogue on the implementation of the Covenant.

7. It furthermore reaffirms its commitment to striving to ensure the respect, promotion and protection of all human rights, including those related to civil and political rights.

Part I. Background and general information

A. Demographic and socioeconomic indicators

1. Demographic indicators

8. Mauritania is a multi-ethnic and multicultural country. The population is predominantly Arab, with Fulani, Soninke and Wolof minorities. It has a population of 3,537,628 (2013 general population and housing census), 27.1 per cent of whom live in Nouakchott, the capital.[1]

Table 1
Population distribution by sex and age group

Age group (years)	*1977*	*1988*			*2000*			*2013*		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*
0–4	216 787	154 808	150 305	305 113	218 087	208 370	426 457	316 217	298 475	614 692
5–9	219 206	154 546	144 263	298 809	186 741	175 736	362 477	263 263	256 839	520 102
10–14	152 665	114 455	104 288	218 743	154 508	148 164	302 672	212 838	216 667	429 505
15–19	138 274	92 683	96 807	189 490	131 240	138 512	269 752	176 116	185 288	361 404
20–24	111 318	74 901	86 562	161 463	100 667	114 292	214 959	144 478	157 962	302 440
25–29	89 029	67 126	77 870	144 996	86 990	100 554	187 544	121 586	135 767	257 353
30–34	73 724	56 457	60 691	117 148	72 906	81 525	154 431	99 834	113 691	213 525
35–39	61 709	44 513	45 159	89 672	64 465	70 887	135 352	83 578	95 379	178 957
40–44	68 686	34 802	38 077	72 879	53 010	53 129	106 139	72 108	79 228	151 336

[1] National Statistics Office.

Age group (years)	1977	1988			2000			2013		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
45–49	47 843	27 593	28 108	55 701	48 653	50 408	99 061	60 297	64 516	124 813
50–54	47 120	30 023	31 908	61 931	32 649	33 165	65 814	50 739	51 751	102 490
55–59	34 398	16 847	14 875	31 722	23 010	21 638	44 648	41 075	40 645	81 720
60–64	27 262	20 190	20 603	40 793	25 093	24 467	49 560	31 660	30 459	62 119
65–69	14 572	11 518	11 131	22 649	16 062	15 582	31 644	24 120	23 055	47 175
70–74	18 414	10 812	12 968	23 780	13 773	13 425	27 198	18 167	17 129	35 296
75 and over	17 823	11 901	17 446	29 347	13 858	16 593	30 451	26 998	27 443	54 441
Total	**1 338 830**	**923 175**	**941 061**	**1 864 236**	**1 241 712**	**1 266 447**	**2 508 159**	**1 743 074**	**1 794 294**	**3 537 368**

2. Socioeconomic indicators

9. Upon the completion of the 2001–2015 Poverty Reduction Strategy Framework, Mauritania launched a strategy centred around accelerated growth and shared prosperity for the period 2016–2030. That strategy falls within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

10. The strategy, which focuses on job creation, seeks to promote diversified, inclusive, green and sustainable economic growth with a view to reducing inequality. It also seeks to strengthen resilience and ensure that prosperity is shared equitably.

11. An assessment of the 2001–2015 Poverty Reduction Strategy Framework highlighted a number of significant achievements:

- Macroeconomic stability;
- Average annual growth of 4.5 per cent;
- Inflation kept to less than 5 per cent on average;
- Increased revenues from extractive industries;
- Reduction in the poverty rate from 51 per cent in 2001 to 46.7 per cent in 2004, 42 per cent in 2008 and 31 per cent in 2014.

12. Furthermore, sizeable investments have been made in health infrastructure, with the building, renovating and equipping of hospitals, establishment of schools of health etc. These efforts have led to considerable progress in the area of disease prevention and control (HIV/AIDS, epidemics, tuberculosis and malaria).

13. The main health indicators are currently as follows: (i) 74 per cent of the population has access to health services within 5 km of their home; (ii) the mortality rate for children under 5 is 75 per 1,000 live births; (iii) 78 per cent of 1-year-olds have been vaccinated against measles; (iv) the maternal mortality rate is 582 per 100,000 births; (v) the contraception prevalence rate is 11.4 per cent; (vi) the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate among 15- to 24-year-olds is 0.7 per cent, having been kept below 1 per cent; and (vii) 5.1 per cent of deaths among children under 5 are caused by malaria.

14. In the education sphere, considerable progress has been made as a result of large-scale programmes to build and upgrade local primary and secondary schools. The number of places available in technical and vocational schools has tripled and, at the post-secondary level, new universities and specialized schools have been established.

15. According to the 2014 government report on the national education system, preschool enrolment rates rose from 5 per cent in 2004 to 9.3 per cent in 2014/15. Data from the general population and housing census indicate that the gross enrolment rate in primary education was an estimated 72.4 per cent in 2013, as opposed to 68.4 per cent in 2000 and 44.7 per cent in 1988. The gross rate at which girls enrol in primary education has been higher than that for boys since 2000. The gross enrolment rate at the general

secondary level, according to census figures, stood at 30.9 per cent in 2013 as opposed to 24.2 per cent in 2000.

16. The supply of technical and vocational training increased significantly over the past decade. According to the 2014 government report on the national education system, the number of students enrolled in such training rose from 1,902 in 2004 to 7,602 in 2014, for an average annual increase of nearly 15 per cent. Private schools accounted for 30.5 per cent of all students pursuing technical and vocational training.

17. There are 12 public institutions of higher learning. According to the 2014 government report, the number of students enrolled in higher education rose from 11,474 in 2004 to 25,454 in 2014, for an average annual increase of 8.3 per cent.

18. Private schools, according to the same report, account for 67.7 per cent of all students in preschool, 14.8 per cent of those in primary school, 25.4 per cent of those in lower-secondary schools, 39.3 per cent of those in upper-secondary schools, 30.5 per cent of those in technical and vocational training and 9.8 per cent of those in institutions of higher learning.

19. A survey conducted in 2010 showed that 9,170 schools used the system of traditional teaching. An estimated 167,152 students, more than 30 per cent of whom were girls, were enrolled in the various levels under that system.

20. The illiteracy rate, according to 2013 census data, stood at 36.3 per cent (41 per cent for women and 31.3 per cent for men), down more than 10 percentage points from 46.9 per cent in 2000.

21. Access to safe drinking water has improved as a result mainly of new infrastructure being built. According to permanent household surveys conducted in 2008 and 2014, the percentage of the population with access to a source of safe drinking water rose from 58.3 per cent in 2008 to 65.4 per cent in 2014. Large-scale water supply projects have been completed (Aftout Sahli) or are under way (Dhar, Aftout Chergui), and an extensive well-drilling programme has been undertaken in the interior of the country.

22. In rural and semi-urban areas, an estimated 42.5 per cent of people living in communities having more than 150 inhabitants has access to safe drinking water, but only 25.8 per cent is connected to a water supply system. In urban areas (where water supply is managed by Société Nationale des Eaux, the national water utility), 100 per cent of the population has access to an average of 40 litres of drinking water a day per person, although in 11 population centres less than 80 per cent of residents has such access. Seventy-two per cent of the population could be connected to the water supply in 2018, when work under way in Nouakchott is completed. Some 149,900 households, including 80,000 in Nouakchott, will need to be connected to a water supply system for all urban households to have direct access to such a system by 2030.

23. According to data from the 2014 permanent household survey, the rate of access to improved sanitation systems rose from 22 per cent in 2010 to 34.5 per cent in 2013 to 47.5 per cent in 2014.

24. The number of kilometres of paved road increased from 1,760 km in 2001 to 4,867 km in 2014. Critical port, airport, energy, information technology, communications and agricultural infrastructure has also been built. Those developments have included the expansion of the autonomous port of Nouakchott and the ports of Nouadhibou and Tanit; the opening of the new international airport in Nouakchott; the construction of power stations and grids that have enabled Société Mauritanienne d'Électricité, the national power company, to boost output from 475 million kW in 2007 to 749 million kW in 2015, an increase of 80 per cent; the laying of undersea cables; the creation of fibre-optic links; and a number of agricultural projects, such as land management projects and work on the Keur Massène channel.

25. In the area of governance, several constitutional amendments were introduced pursuant to consultations that had been held with stakeholders; those amendments triggered sweeping changes in the institutional landscape. An anti-corruption strategy was adopted

and has led to a shift in attitudes towards public funds; systems for keeping vital records have been overhauled; and biometric identification has been introduced.

26. Initiatives designed to foster good governance and build capacity have resulted in significant progress being made in many areas, including policy formulation, the democratic process, regional and local government, the environment and the economy.

27. Political and democratic governance has been strengthened as an outcome of the transparent constitutional referendum the Government organized at the conclusion of an inclusive political dialogue that involved the ruling coalition, much of the opposition, trade unions and civil society organizations.

B. Constitutional and judicial structures

1. Constitutional framework

28. The Constitution of 1991, amended in 2006, 2012 and 2017, established several institutions, including the Constitutional Council, the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, the Court of Auditors, the High Council for Fatwas and Administrative Appeals and the National Human Rights Commission.

29. Article 1 of the Constitution states: "Mauritania is an indivisible, democratic and social Islamic republic. The Republic guarantees all citizens equality before the law without distinction as to origin, race, sex or social status." The principle of democracy is enshrined in article 3, which states that sovereignty is vested in the Mauritanian people, who shall exercise it through their representatives or by referendum.

30. The republican form of the State is founded on the principle of the separation of powers. The President is elected by direct universal suffrage for a term of five years, which is renewable once. The President formulates State policy, which is implemented by the government under the leadership of the Prime Minister.

31. Legislative power is exercised by a unicameral parliament (the National Assembly), which adopts laws and is responsible for oversight of government action.

32. The country has a devolved and decentralized administrative structure. It is divided into governorates (*wilayas*) (15), departments (*moughataas*) (58) and districts (*communes*) (218). The different levels of the administration work together to advance the political, economic and social development of the country.

2. Judicial institutions

33. The judicial system is based on the principle of the right to a second hearing before a higher court. The system is composed of courts at the governorate and department levels, courts of appeal and a supreme court. The High Court of Justice hears cases involving the highest authorities of the State (the President and members of the government). The Constitutional Court hears cases concerning constitutional matters.

34. The High Council for Fatwas and Administrative Appeals proposes solutions that are in conformity with Islamic law.

35. The Government has improved the performance of the justice system and made justice more accessible by establishing new courts, including a court of appeal in Aleg, two governorate-level courts in Nouakchott Nord and Nouakchott Sud, a labour court in Zouerate, three specialized anti-slavery courts and a specialized anti-corruption court. It has also formulated a national anti-corruption strategy, and sectoral anti-corruption plans are implemented by government agencies working in cooperation with civil society, which monitors compliance with national anti-corruption legislation.

Table 2
Work of courts of first instance, 2016

Civil, commercial and administrative matters

Description	*Number*
Cases filed	5 952
Judgments handed down	2 189
Conciliation proceedings	2 158
Appeals	694
Appeals on points of law	115
Provisional orders	2 394
Appeals against provisional orders	262
Applications to set aside judgments	73

Criminal courts, criminal chambers and juvenile chambers

Description	*Number*
Cases filed	2 613
Judgments handed down	1 764
Provisional orders	755
Appeals	986
Appeals against provisional orders	90
Applications to set aside judgments	12

Investigating judges

Description	*Number*
Cases filed	3 396
Accused persons	4 391
Cases referred to a criminal court	813
Cases referred to a criminal chamber	893
Cases in which the investigation was closed	1 671
Detention orders	2 256
Release orders	669
Orders for release under judicial supervision	1 473
Dismissal orders	177
Orders resulting from conciliation proceedings	606
Sureties	424
Prison visits	436
Letters rogatory	165
Decisions to release on bail	200
Expert evaluations	24
Arrest warrants	160

Statistics from the Nouakchott Public Prosecution Service, 2016

Serious offences

Classification	*Number*
Aggravated theft	311
Rape	58
Possession, sale and importation of drugs	139
Sale of alcohol	16
Unlawful sexual intercourse (*zina*)	20
Murder	21
Forgery and use of forged documents with intent to defraud	10
Destruction of the property of others	21
Death threats	4
Deliberate assault	156
Terrorism	0

Other punishable offences

Classification	*Number*
Theft	364
Assault and battery	77
Unintentional wounding	56
Manslaughter	59
Fraud	122
Fraudulent breach of trust	51
Drug use	140
Use of psychotropic substances	151
Forgery and use of forged documents with intent to defraud	14
Writing of uncovered cheques	46
Obstruction of justice	17
Filial disobedience	7
Sexual assault	12
Corruption	1
Threats of violence	26
Witchcraft and charlatanism	6
Gambling	3
Kidnapping	1
Vagrancy	3
Importation of weapons	3
Driving without a licence	12
Driving without insurance	8
Acting under false pretences	7
Desertion	0
Escape from custody	7
Setting of house fires	2
Other offences	0

C. General framework for the protection and promotion of human rights

1. Acceptance of international human rights norms

Table 3
Principal international human rights instruments ratified by Mauritania

No.	*Instrument*	*Date of adoption*	*Date of ratification*	*Reservations/comments*
1	Universal Declaration of Human Rights	1948	Preamble to the Constitution of 20 July 1991	Incorporated into the preamble to the Constitution of 20 July 1991.
2	United Nations Convention against Corruption	2003		
3	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	1965	1988	Reservation: art. 14: Mauritania has not made the declaration under article 14 recognizing the competence of the Committee to receive individual complaints.
4	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	1979	1990	Reservations: arts. 13 (a) and 16.
5	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	1990	2003	
6	Convention on the Rights of the Child	1989	1990	Reservation: Mauritania has approved all parts of the Convention not contrary to sharia law.
7	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	2006	2010	
8	International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	2006	2012	
9	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	1966	1999	Reservations: arts. 18 (2)–(4), art. 23 (4). The Government of Mauritania declared that the application of these provisions would be without prejudice to sharia law.
10	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	1966	1999	
11	Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment		2012	
12	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	2006	2010	

No.	Instrument	Date of adoption	Date of ratification	Reservations/comments
13	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	1984	1999	Reservations: art. 20 (1–5), concerning the competence of the Committee; and art. 30 (1), concerning the International Court of Justice.

2. Scope and nature of reservations

(a) Scope of reservations

36. Mauritania has entered general or specific reservations to the following instruments:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: reservations relate to articles 13 (a) and 16.
- Convention on the Rights of the Child: Mauritania has approved all parts of the Convention not contrary to sharia law.
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: reservations relate to articles 18 (2–4) and 23 (4).
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment: reservations relate to article 20 (1–5), concerning the competence of the Committee, and article 30 (1), on the International Criminal Court.

(b) Reasons for the reservations

37. These reservations were deemed necessary because they concern provisions that are contrary to sharia law, the sole source of Mauritanian law under the Constitution.

(c) Effect of the reservations

38. The provisions to which reservations have been made are not applicable; all other provisions retain the full legal force they are granted under article 80 of the Constitution.

(d) Follow-up to declarations emanating from conferences

39. Through its participation in international human rights conferences, Mauritania has given effective support to the declarations, recommendations and commitments adopted by those conferences.

40. Pursuant to such declarations and recommendations of international conferences, in particular the one held in Vienna in 1993, Mauritania withdrew and replaced its general reservation to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and is considering similar action in respect of its general reservation to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

(e) Derogations, restrictions and limitations

41. Other than the reservations it has entered, Mauritania has not restricted, limited or derogated from the international instruments it has ratified.

Table 4
Principal International Labour Organization conventions ratified by Mauritania

No.	Instrument	Date of adoption	Date of ratification	Reservations/comments
1	Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111)	1958	8 November 1963	

No.	*Instrument*	*Date of adoption*	*Date of ratification*	*Reservations/comments*
2	Equality of Treatment (Accident Compensation) Convention (No. 19)	1925	8 November 1963	
3	Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100) (agriculture)	1951	3 December 2001	
4	Equality of Treatment (Social Security) Convention (No. 118)	1962	15 July 1968	Accepted in respect of branches (d) to (g) and (i).
5	Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No. 105)	1957	3 April 1997	
6	Forced Labour Convention (No. 29)	1930	20 June 1961	
7	Maternity Protection Convention (No. 3)	1919	8 November 1963	
8	Night Work (Women) Convention (No. 4)	1919	20 June 1961	Denounced on 2 August 1965.
9	Night Work (Women) Convention (No. 41)	1934	20 June 1961	Denounced on ratification of Convention No. 89.
10	Night Work (Women) Convention (No. 89)	1948	8 November 1963	
11	Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182)	1999	3 December 2001	
12	Minimum Age (Industry) Convention (No. 5)	1919	20 June 1961	Denounced on ratification of Convention No. 138.
13	Night Work of Young Persons Convention (No. 6)	1919	20 June 1961	
14	Minimum Age (Trimmers and Stokers) Convention (No. 15)	1921	8 November 1963	
15	Minimum Age (Non-Industrial Employment) Convention (No. 33)	1932	20 June 1961	
16	Minimum Age (Sea) Convention (No. 58)	1936	8 November 1963	
17	Night Work of Young Persons (Industry) Convention (No. 90)	1948	8 November 1963	
18	Minimum Age (Fishermen) Convention (No. 112)	1957	8 November 1963	
19	Minimum Age Convention (No. 138)	1973	3 December 2001	Minimum age specified: 14 years.
20	Holidays with Pay Convention (No. 52)	1936	8 November 1963	
21	Paid Vacations (Seafarers) Convention (No. 91)	1949	8 November 1963	
22	Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (No. 98)	1949	3 December 2001	

No.	Instrument	Date of adoption	Date of ratification	Reservations comments
23	Holidays with Pay (Agriculture) Convention (No. 101)	1952	8 November 1963	
24	Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention (No. 102)	1952	15 July 1968	Accepted parts V to VII, IX and X.
25	White Lead (Painting) Convention (No. 13)	1921	20 June 1961	
26	Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention (No. 14)	1921	20 June 1961	
27	Workmen's Compensation (Accidents) Convention (No. 17)	1925	8 January 1963	
28	Workmen's Compensation (Occupational Diseases) Convention (No. 18)	1925	20 June 1961	
29	Seamen's Articles of Agreement Convention (No. 22)	1926	8 November 1963	
30	Repatriation of Seamen Convention (No. 23)	1926	8 November 1963	
31	Minimum Wage-Fixing Machinery Convention (No. 26)	1928	20 June 1961	
32	Officers' Competency Certificates Convention (No. 53)	1936	8 November 1963	
33	Safety Provisions (Building) Convention (No. 62)	1937	8 November 1963	
34	Labour Inspection Convention (No. 81)	1947	8 November 1963	
35	Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (No. 87)	1948	20 June 1961	
36	Labour Clauses (Public Contracts) Convention (No. 94)	1949	8 November 1963	
37	Protection of Wages Convention (No. 95)	1949	20 June 1961	
38	Fee-Charging Employment Agencies Convention (No. 96)	1949	31 March 1964	Accepted the provisions of part II.
39	Fishermen's Articles of Agreement Convention (No. 114)	1959	8 November 1963	
40	Final Articles Revision Convention (No. 116)	1961	8 November 1963	
41	Employment Policy Convention (No. 122)	1964	30 July 1971	

Table 5
Ratification of instruments relating to international humanitarian law and refugees

No.	*Instrument*	*Date of adoption*	*Date of ratification*	*Reservations comments*
1	Convention relating to the Status of Refugees	1951	1987	
2	Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field	1949	1962	
3	Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea	1949	1962	
4	Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War	1949	1962	
5	Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War	1949	1962	
6	Protocol additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts (Protocol I)	1977	1980	
7	Protocol additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the protection of victims of non-international armed conflicts	1977	1980	
8	Convention relating to the Status of Refugees	1951	1987	
9	Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa	1969	1972	
10	Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees	1967	1987	
11	Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction	1997	2000	

Table 6
Ratification of regional human rights instruments

No.	*Instrument*	*Date of adoption*	*Date of ratification*	*Reservations comments*
1	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights	1981	1986	Incorporated into the preamble to the Constitution of 20 July 1991.
2	Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights	1988	2005	
3	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child	1990	2005	

No.	Instrument	Date of adoption	Date of ratification	Reservations/comments
4	Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa	2003	2005	
5	African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance	2011	2008	
6	Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights	1998	2005	
7	Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa	1969	1972	

3. Legal framework for the protection of human rights at the national level

(a) Enshrinement in the Constitution

42. Human rights are enshrined in the preamble to the Constitution, which states: "The Mauritanian people, fortified by their spiritual values and the development of their civilization, solemnly proclaim their attachment to Islam and to the principles of democracy as defined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948 and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of 28 June 1981 and by the other international conventions to which Mauritania is a party." The Constitution protects all the rights and freedoms set forth in the instruments to which Mauritania is a party.

(b) Incorporation of human rights treaties

43. Under the country's monist legal system, the international human rights instruments ratified by Mauritania are incorporated into domestic legislation in accordance with article 80 of the Constitution.

(c) Authorities with powers in human rights matters

44. The principal authorities with powers in human rights matters are the Constitutional Council, the courts, the Commission for Human Rights and Humanitarian Action, the National Human Rights Commission, the relevant ministerial departments, the High Council for Fatwas and Administrative Appeals and the national mechanism for the prevention of torture. These authorities have powers throughout the country in relation to questions falling within their respective remits.

(d) Ability to invoke human rights instruments before the courts

45. All the provisions of conventions ratified by Mauritania can be invoked before the courts, and judges are required to apply them.

(e) Remedies

46. Administrative and judicial remedies are available and may result in the award of civil damages and the imposition of administrative and/or criminal penalties on the perpetrator.

(f) National mechanisms for the protection and promotion of human rights

47. The Commission for Human Rights and Humanitarian Action is responsible for formulating and implementing national policy on the promotion, defence and protection of human rights.

48. The remit of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and the Family includes proposing projects and programmes aimed at the advancement of women and their

involvement in the development process, as well as the promotion and protection of the rights of children, persons with disabilities and older persons.

49. The remit of the National Human Rights Commission, an independent constitutional body for the promotion and protection of human rights that has been accredited with A status, includes issuing, at the request of the Government or on its own initiative, advisory opinions on general and specific questions concerning the promotion and protection of human rights and respect for individual and collective freedoms.

50. The majority of the Commission's members are representatives of civil society organizations and professional bodies, who have the right to vote; the Commission also includes representatives of the different offices concerned, who are non-voting members. The Commission is funded from the State budget, which has a separate budget line for it.

51. The authorities and human rights organizations disseminate the various treaties and conventions to which Mauritania is a party through the press, workshops and promotional materials, and they ensure that these instruments are accessible by explaining their content in the different national languages, as necessary.

52. The parliament makes laws and ensures that national legislation is in conformity with the provisions of duly ratified international instruments. The parliamentary group on human rights promotes and disseminates the principles of human rights and ensures that those rights are protected.

53. The national mechanism for the prevention of torture sees that the legislation in force in this area is respected.

54. The High Council for Fatwas and Administrative Appeals does the same in its area of competence.

55. Associations are regulated by Act No. 64.098 of 9 June 1964, as amended by Act No. 73.007 of 23 June 1973 and Act No. 73.157 of 2 July 1973. More than 6,028 national and 57 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operate in the country. The number of associations has increased markedly since 2008, when there were only 1,106. Associations are active in fields such as human rights, social issues, development, health, the environment, culture, sports and the arts, and they may, upon request, be granted tax exemptions for the equipment and materials they require to carry out their activities. This exemption is automatic for associations recognized to be in the public interest.

56. Recognition of the jurisdiction of a regional human rights court or similar mechanism

57. Mauritania has recognized the jurisdiction of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.

(g) Dissemination of human rights instruments

58. Several conventions have been the subject of information and awareness-raising campaigns, including the following:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Measures to disseminate the Convention have included:
    - Translation into the four national languages;
    - Publication of an explanatory handbook on the Convention and the organization of large-scale awareness-raising campaigns in the media (radio and television);
    - Community-based campaigns carried out by NGOs;
    - Implementation of other programmes, supervised by the communications unit of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and the Family through its regional offices.

- Convention on the Rights of the Child. Measures to disseminate the Convention have included:
  - Preparation and distribution of an explanatory handbook on the Convention;
  - Establishment of regional networks — made up mainly of department-level children's rights units — to promote the rights of the child;
  - Organization of annual awareness-raising campaigns on the rights of the child in conjunction with Children's Days;
  - Provision of training on children's rights to members of civil society.
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Measures to disseminate this Convention have included:
  - Campaigns in each of the country's governorates;
  - Preparation of an explanatory handbook on the provisions of the Convention;
  - Provision of training for several organizations of persons with disabilities.
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. A number of activities have been organized to raise awareness of the Convention, including the following:
  - Awareness-raising and training seminars for law enforcement officers on the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
  - Workshops for judges and criminal investigation officers on police custody and torture prevention;
  - Requiring the administrative and judicial authorities to systematically undertake investigations as soon as an allegation of torture is made;
  - Imposing, if appropriate, the penalties established in Act No. 2015.033 of 10 September 2015 on the prohibition of torture.

59. All the international instruments ratified by Mauritania that are subject to monitoring by the human rights treaty bodies have been published in the Official Gazette.

(h) Raising human rights awareness among public officials and other human rights professionals

60. Human rights awareness and training plans are organized for civil servants. Seminars have been held for law enforcement officers by the Ministry of Justice, the Commission for Human Rights and Humanitarian Action and the National Human Rights Commission, with technical support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) country office, the Association for the Prevention of Torture and Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (ACAT):

- Raising awareness through educational programmes and disseminating information through school health and environment clubs;
- Initial training (teacher training colleges and the National School of Administration, Journalism and Legal Service Training);
- In-service training programmes, including awareness-raising campaigns and ad hoc courses.

(i) Promotion of human rights awareness through the mass media

61. State and private media are called on to provide national coverage of activities to promote and protect human rights. Radio and television programmes on topics relating to human rights are broadcast periodically.

(j) Role of civil society

62. Civil society works with the authorities on human rights awareness-raising programmes for the general public.

(k) Budget allocations and trends

63. Budgetary resources are allocated annually to ministerial departments, institutions and other bodies and NGOs working in the field of human rights.

(l) Development cooperation and assistance

64. Technical assistance for the promotion and protection of human rights is provided by OHCHR, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other partners.

D. Factors hampering implementation of international human rights obligations

65. The main obstacles preventing the country from achieving full enjoyment of human rights are the shortage of human and financial resources at the institutions and organizations responsible for defending human rights and the low level of specialist expertise among human rights defenders.

E. Reporting process

66. An interministerial technical committee is responsible for preparing reports relating to international legal instruments in the field of human rights.

67. The Government has set up an interministerial committee to draft reports and follow up on the implementation of recommendations made by treaty bodies and during the universal periodic review. The committee includes representatives of all ministerial departments and the National Human Rights Commission. The OHCHR office in Mauritania has observer status.

1. Transmission of reports to stakeholders before submission to treaty bodies

68. The national report submitted as part of the universal periodic review was made available to the parliament for observations and comment before it was submitted to the working group. This practice is followed for all reports that are to be submitted to treaty bodies.

2. Participation of non-governmental and independent bodies

69. Recommendations made at consultation and discussion workshops with civil society and parliamentary authorities are taken into account for validation of the reports.

F. Measures to ensure wide dissemination of the concluding observations and recommendations issued by treaty bodies after review of a State party report

70. The interministerial technical committee responsible for drafting reports shares them — and the conclusions and recommendations of treaty bodies and the universal periodic review — with the parliament. They are also disseminated through the media.

1. Follow-up to international conferences

71. Mauritania systematically follows up on the declarations adopted at various world conferences, in particular those held in Vienna in 1993, in Durban in 2001 and in Beijing in

1995; the World Conference on Women; and the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Government implements the commitments made at the different conferences through its ministries and institutions.

2. Information on non-discrimination, equality and effective remedies

Non-discrimination and equality

72. The principle of non-discrimination is established in the Constitution. It is incorporated in legislation and given practical expression in many areas, including equality of treatment in taxation and in access to justice, equal pay for equal work, equal access to public services etc.

73. The Constitution guarantees women the right to participate in political and public life. It also gives them all the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of 1981.

74. Article 1, paragraph 2, of the Constitution provides: "The Republic guarantees all citizens equality before the law, without distinction as to origin, race, sex or social status." Article 12 states: "All citizens may accede to public office or employment without any conditions other than those determined by law."

75. Positive discrimination and temporary special measures have been applied with regard to elections and elected offices. The quota reserved for women in those areas has increased significantly. Places are reserved for women in all recruitment processes.

3. Equality before the law and equal protection under the law

76. Mauritania has a judicial system that is founded on the principle of the right to a second hearing before a higher court, and it provides legal assistance to facilitate access to justice.

4. Effective remedies

77. International human rights instruments ratified by Mauritania are incorporated in domestic law pursuant to article 80 of the Constitution. Under that article, all provisions on human rights derived from duly ratified conventions can be invoked before the courts, and judges are required to apply them.

G. Follow-up to concluding observations of human rights treaty bodies

78. The various observations and recommendations are shared and discussed at workshops, the conclusions of which are sent to the appropriate authorities. This is the procedure followed also for the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee against Torture, the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Sectoral action plans for implementing concluding observations are in place. A national action plan is currently being drawn up with assistance from the OHCHR country office; the plan covers the recommendations made by the treaty bodies and those made as part of the universal periodic review.

Part II. Implementation of the Covenant and of the Committee's recommendations pursuant to its review of the initial report

79. Since the submission of its initial report in October 2013, the Government has continued to pursue its efforts to implement the provisions of the Covenant.

80. In addition, it has taken action to implement the Committee's concluding observations as described in the following paragraphs.

Recommendation 1

The State party should systematically publish in the Official Gazette the Acts ratifying the human rights treaties and conventions, as well as the texts of these instruments, including the Covenant. It should also raise the awareness of judges, lawyers and prosecutors of the Covenant, to ensure that its provisions are taken into account by the national courts.

81. The Government, with support from the OHCHR office in Nouakchott, published the main international human rights instruments in a special edition of the Official Gazette (No. 1326 bis of 9 December 2014). The following texts were published:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families;
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance;
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

82. This decision was taken with a view to aligning domestic legislation with those instruments, to ensuring that the instruments' provisions enjoy full effect and are taken into account by domestic courts, and to raising awareness among the stakeholders involved.

83. Several training seminars and awareness-raising workshops for judges, prosecutors and lawyers have been run by the Ministry of Justice, the Commission for Human Rights and Humanitarian Action, the National Human Rights Commission, the national torture prevention mechanism and a number of other institutions.

Recommendation 2

The State party should ensure that the reference to Islam does not prevent the full application of the Covenant in its legal order and does not serve to justify the State party not implementing its obligations under the Covenant. The Committee therefore encourages the State party to consider withdrawing its reservations to article 18 and article 23 (4) of the Covenant.

84. As a Muslim country, Mauritania entered a reservation to articles 18 and 23 of the Covenant because they are incompatible with sharia law, which is the sole source of law under the Constitution. It nonetheless remains deeply attached to the spirit and letter of the provisions of the Covenant that do not infringe sharia law.

Recommendation 3

The State party should adopt a definition of, and prohibit, racial discrimination in its legislation in conformity with the Covenant. It should also combat discrimination based on ethnic origin in all areas and expedite the drafting, approval and adoption of the draft national plan of action against racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and both implement and publicize it.

85. Mauritania fully endorses the principles and values that guide the international community's efforts to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

86. The Constitution prohibits discrimination on racial or ethnic grounds and it recognizes the civil and political rights, as well as the economic and social rights, of citizens.

87. National legislation prohibits all forms of discrimination. Under Act No. 2015.031 on slavery and penalties for slavery-like practices, any form of discrimination based on slavery is illegal (art. 2).

88. The legislation governing the freedom of the press makes it illegal for the media to print publications or transmit speech that incites hatred or ethnic and regional prejudices. The Freedom of the Press Code (Ordinance No. 2006-017 as amended by Act No. 2011-054) criminalizes all forms of defamation and insults based on ethnic, national, racial, regional or religious affiliation (art. 40) and prohibits and criminalizes any provocation or incitement to violence (arts. 32 ff.).

89. Act No. 2016.007 on cybercrime lays down penalties for producing, recording, supplying or publishing on a computer or in any other electronic format text messages, images, sound files or any other means of expressing ideas or theories that seek to justify crimes against humanity or incite to violence or racial hatred (art. 23).

90. Article 1 of the bill criminalizing discrimination, which has been approved by the Government, defines discrimination as "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference which has or may have the purpose or effect of nullifying, compromising or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life", thus fully incorporating the international definition of discrimination.

91. The Political Parties Act stipulates that parties shall refrain from any incitement to intolerance or violence and from any propaganda that is intended to undermine territorial integrity or national unity.

92. The recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance are reflected in the country's anti-discrimination strategy.

93. The Labour Code enshrines the principle of non-discrimination and makes explicit reference to equality in access to employment. The Code prohibits any form of discrimination, distinction, exclusion or preference based on race, national origin, colour, sex, religion, political opinion or social background.

94. The Government neither supports nor tolerates acts of racial discrimination. The way in which the State and public institutions operate is governed by the Constitution, which prohibits and criminalizes racial discrimination. This prohibition is set out explicitly in the Civil Service Act, which is the core legislation governing how the civil service operates in Mauritania.

95. The Government, the parliament, political parties, professional associations and local authorities attach priority importance to the exercise and equal enjoyment, without discrimination, of civil and political rights and individual and collective freedoms.

96. The migration policy that is now in place promotes the entry, stay and employment of foreign nationals.

Recommendation 4

The Committee respects the cultural diversity and moral principles of all countries, but recalls that these always remain subordinate to the principles of the universality of human rights and non-discrimination (general comment No. 34 (2011) on freedom of opinion and freedom of expression, para. 32). Consequently, the State party should decriminalize homosexuality and take the necessary measures to protect the freedom and privacy of the person.

97. The Mauritanian legal system is based on sharia law, which is the sole source of law and which bans homosexuality and any other relationship contrary to nature and to Muslim principles and values.

Recommendation 5

The State party should continue its efforts to improve the level of representation of women in political and public affairs and continue campaigns to raise women's awareness and inform them of their rights. The State party should review its Nationality Code to allow Mauritanian women to transmit their nationality on an equal footing with men and the 2001 Personal Status Code to remove the provisions that discriminate against women.

98. The Nationality Code, contained in Act No. 61-112, as amended, stipulates that children born to a Mauritanian mother and a stateless father or a father of unknown nationality are Mauritanian by birth, as are children born in Mauritania to a Mauritanian mother and a foreign father (art. 8).

99. Amendments are currently under consideration that would update Act No. 61-112 to ensure equality between men and women in terms of the acquisition and transmission of nationality.

100. The following measures have been taken with regard to the participation of women in political life:

- The establishment of a national list of 20 women candidates for election as members of the parliament;
- The establishment of a list of 18 seats in Nouakchott that alternate between men and women;
- An increase in the number of three-seat voting districts in which one seat is reserved for a woman;
- A rise in the representation of women in the National Assembly, from 19 per cent in 2006 to 22.4 per cent in 2013, and at the district level, from 30 per cent to 35.58 per cent over the same period;
- The presence of women in decision-making structures;
- 9 out of 27 ministers are women (33 per cent);
- 31 out of 147 deputies are women (21 per cent);
- Six mayors, including the president of the Municipality of Nouakchott, the national capital, are women; and four mayors of rural districts are women;
- 1,317 out of 3,722 municipal councillors are women (35.5 per cent).

101. There was one woman among the five candidates declared eligible to run in the presidential election of June 2014.

102. Women make up 34.6 per cent of the civil service and 5.9 per cent of public-sector managers. There are three women judges and seven women directors at the secretary-general level (out of 30), and two of the six television channels are headed by women (the national channel and a private channel).

Recommendation 6

The State party should ensure that women victims of violence, including rape, are able to bring charges easily and, to this end, should review the requirement that a witness must be produced when a charge of rape is brought. It should also strengthen the protective measures for victims and refrain from criminal prosecution. Finally, the State party should strengthen its awareness campaigns, particularly in the framework of the national plan of action to combat violence against women and girls, and train officers to enforce the law on violence against women. The State party should include in its next report to the Committee the results of the survey conducted by the National Statistics Office on all forms of violence against women

and girls and provide statistical data on the investigations into, prosecutions and convictions of, and penalties imposed on the perpetrators of violence against women.

103. Rape is classified as a serious offence punishable by hard labour, without prejudice to applicable *hadd* penalties as prescribed by law (Criminal Code, art. 309).

104. There is no specific requirement for a witness to be produced in cases involving rape. As with any other criminal offence, the crime can be established by means of any legally acceptable evidence. The judge then comes to a decision based on his or her personal conviction and on the strength of the legally acceptable evidence, in accordance with article 386 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

105. However, rape, as an act of violence whereby a non-consenting person is forced to engage in sexual intercourse, should not be confused with the offence of *zina*, which is also sexual intercourse out of wedlock, but it is committed voluntarily, in other words, by consenting persons. Commission of the offence of *zina* is established by the testimony of four witnesses, by the perpetrator's admission or by the fact that the woman has become pregnant (Criminal Code, art. 307).

106. Anyone who claims to have suffered harm as the result of a crime may bring civil action at any point, either by lodging a complaint with the criminal investigation department or the prosecution service or by lodging a complaint with the investigating judge or the presiding judge of the competent court. In the event of a decision not to prosecute, victims may bring their case, under conditions defined by law, before the investigating judge or the presiding judge of the competent court.

107. The draft framework law on gender-based violence, which has been approved by the Government, is currently before the parliament for a vote. The law seeks to:

- Recognize the rights of women victims of violence;
- Set up an official protection system;
- Strengthen the country's criminal law;
- Provide women with comprehensive protection under the justice system;
- Improve the assistance provided to victims.

108. Several steps have been taken to disseminate information and raise awareness among practitioners and the public and to better assist victims of violence, including:

- Advocacy and consultation seminars for members of the judiciary (court presidents, lawyers, criminal investigation officers, gendarmes, police superintendents and officers);
- Training of trainers in the human rights sphere;
- Preparation and dissemination of a handbook on judicial procedures;
- Development and roll-out, in six regions, of standard operating procedures on combating violence.

109. The National Survey on Violence against Women, conducted in 2011, provided an overview of the situation with regard to gender-based violence and yielded the following findings:

- Physical violence, 6.1 per cent; sexual violence, 14.7 per cent; psychological violence, 63.9 per cent;
- The overall rate of violence was estimated to be over 68 per cent, taking into account the impact of psychological violence;
- Sexual violence was acknowledged to exist, and prevention and protection measures were put in place.

Recommendation 7

The State party should ensure the effective implementation of article 12 of the ordinance on the judicial protection of children and adopt the bill specifically

criminalizing female genital mutilation. The State party should also step up and continue its campaigns and other measures to raise awareness of and combat female genital mutilation among the population, including in rural areas.

110. Mauritania has strengthened its engagement in promoting and protecting women's rights — as part of the effort to combat violence against women, including female genital mutilation — by acceding to international conventions that protect women's rights and putting in place a framework comprising:

- The National Committee to Combat Gender-based Violence, including Female Genital Mutilation;
- Regional committees to combat gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation;
- A network of NGOs working in the area of female genital mutilation;
- Standard operating procedures for combating violence against women with the aim of providing a better response and comprehensive care for survivors of female genital mutilation;
- A draft framework law on combating violence against women and girls (female genital mutilation; sexual, domestic and psychological violence; etc.), which is before the parliament;
- A strategy for accelerated growth and shared prosperity for the period 2016–2030 which includes a gender and human rights perspective;
- The National Strategy for Gender Mainstreaming and institutional arrangements to ensure coordination, steering and follow-up (a national committee chaired by the Prime Minister, a gender monitoring group and sectoral units);
- Training for 180 mosque-based imams in regions where female genital mutilation is very prevalent;
- An action plan for voluntary abandonment of female genital mutilation in governorates where the practice is very prevalent;
- Dissemination through the public and private media of a fatwa banning female genital mutilation;
- A national action plan on gender-based violence covering the period 2014–2018 and aimed at providing a comprehensive understanding of the issue and a better response to this kind of violence;
- Extended system of regional committees and units to address and settle family disputes;
- Commemoration of the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation;
- Materials (booklets, leaflets, films, module on female genital mutilation);
- A strategy for the elimination of female genital mutilation, together with a five-year plan;
- Awareness-raising campaigns against harmful practices, including female genital mutilation and child marriage;
- Standardized training modules — that include a cultural component — on female genital mutilation.

111. The prevalence of genital mutilation among girls has shown a downward trend: the rate was 65.8 per cent in 2007 (Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2007), falling to 54.8 per cent in 2011 (Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2011) and to 53.2 per cent in 2015.

Recommendation 8

The State party should consider abolishing the death penalty and ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. The State party should ensure

that the death penalty is not, under any circumstances, imposed in violation of the guarantees provided for in article 6 of the Covenant.

112. There is a de facto moratorium on the death penalty and no executions have been carried out since 1987. Under Mauritanian law, capital punishment is reserved for the most serious crimes.

Recommendation 9

The State party should carry out systematic and thorough investigations into these cases, prosecute the alleged perpetrators and, if they are found guilty, sentence them to penalties in proportion to the seriousness of the acts, and grant appropriate compensation to the victims and their families. It should develop and strengthen the human rights education programmes for members of the security forces, particularly in respect of the provisions of the Covenant. The State party should, in its next report, inform the Committee of the outcome of the investigation by the Kadei Public Prosecutor's Office into the death of the young man Lamine Manghane.

113. Thorough investigations are systematically conducted in such cases with a view to prosecuting all alleged perpetrators, who, if found guilty, are subject to conviction and providing reparation for victims. Regarding the Manghane case, an investigation was conducted by an independent authority other than the unit involved in the events, namely, the Gorgol national gendarmerie unit, overseen by the State prosecutor responsible for that area. The unit transmitted its findings to the State prosecutor, who closed the case inasmuch as no personal responsibility could be assigned to any individual and taking into account the immediacy of the situation and the conditions for legitimate self-defence in which the besieged unit had found itself. The victim's family was granted compensation.

Recommendation 10

The State party should adopt a definition of and clearly criminalize torture in the Criminal Code, in conformity with article 1 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the relevant international standards. It should also ensure that any investigation into acts of torture, ill-treatment or excessive use of force attributed to members of the police or security forces should be conducted by an independent authority. The State party should furthermore ensure that members of the law enforcement agencies are trained to prevent torture and ill-treatment, and to investigate such offences, by making sure that the Manual on Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol) is included in all training programmes for them. It should also ensure that allegations of torture and ill-treatment are the subject of thorough and impartial investigations, that the alleged perpetrators are brought to justice and, if found guilty, are sentenced to penalties commensurate with the seriousness of their acts, and that the victims receive adequate compensation. The State party should guarantee regular access to all places of deprivation of liberty and, following its ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, put in place a national preventive mechanism.

114. Mauritania acceded to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and its Optional Protocol on 17 November 2004. The two instruments were given effect through the enactment of a law criminalizing torture and a law establishing a national preventive mechanism.

115. The law criminalizing torture punishes that act as a crime against humanity in accordance with provisions of the Constitution. The law's definition of torture takes into account that that crime is not subject to statutory limitations in order to determine the appropriate punishment. The text incorporates the provisions of the Convention and provides for redress for victims.

116. The law contains definitions of terms to assist judicial authorities in combating torture. The prevention of torture is addressed by way of guarantees provided in the following areas:

- Deprivation of liberty;
- Prohibition of unlawful detention;
- Admissibility of statements made under torture;
- Training on the prohibition of torture;
- Monitoring of detention.

117. The law criminalizing torture stipulates that allegations must be investigated systematically and impartially; it sets the corresponding penalty and defines aggravating circumstances; it prohibits incommunicado detention; and it does not allow any justification for torture.

118. So that authorities may take effective action in combating torture, the law contains provisions concerning legal jurisdiction, the refusal of extradition when there is a risk of torture, and mutual legal assistance.

119. Provision is made for the protection and support that is to be offered to victims of torture, witnesses, investigators and their families, as well as the redress due to victims.

120. All places of deprivation of liberty, whether police cells, pretrial detention facilities or prisons, are subject to visits, including unannounced visits, by the national preventive mechanism, the National Human Rights Commission and any other body with the authority to conduct prison visits, such as representatives of the prosecution service, investigating judges, sentence enforcement judges, presidents of indictment chambers, as well as civil society actors as permitted under relevant law.

121. The law on the prevention and criminalization of torture recognizes the importance of training in torture prevention for practitioners and stakeholders. Thus, a number of training activities for judges, criminal investigation officers, prison guards and lawyers have been offered in partnership with the national preventive mechanism, the National Human Rights Commission, technical and financial partners and civil society organizations.

122. Human rights and torture prevention are now part of the basic curriculum in police and prison guard academies and the National School of Administration, Journalism and Legal Service Training.

Recommendation 11

The State party should ensure that confessions obtained under duress are not used or accepted by the courts as evidence of the guilt of suspects. To that end, the State party should ensure the effective application of its Code of Criminal Procedure which provides that "any confession obtained under torture, violence or duress is inadmissible".

123. The principle of the inadmissibility of confessions obtained through violence or duress is enshrined in the Code of Criminal Procedure and is applied in practice. By way of example, the criminal court of Nouakchott disallowed the preliminary investigation report in a terrorism case on the grounds that there was strong reason to believe that the accused's statements had been obtained through violence or duress (judgment No. 128 of 31 July 2007, case No. 051RP2006). Similarly, the appeals court of Nouakchott disallowed the statements of at least one of the accused in a drug trafficking case because the individual's confession had been extracted through violence or duress (decision No. 102/2016 of 29 August 2016, case No. 0101/RP/2016).

Recommendation 12

The State party should take specific measures to end the practice of corporal punishment in all circumstances. It should encourage the use of non-violent disciplinary measures to replace corporal punishment and conduct information campaigns to raise public awareness of the harmful consequences of this type of violence.

124. The establishment of a juvenile squad within the police force to investigate cases of child prostitution, trafficking in children and child abuse has boosted the capacity for

investigating these offences. No new cases of abuse or trafficking have been identified or brought before the courts since the unit's establishment.

125. The decree containing the rules and regulations governing the country's schools prohibits any form of corporal punishment in school environments. As from the moment any case is reported to the authorities — regardless of where the child was at the time the violence occurred — the provisions of the Children's Code are applicable. That Code prohibits inflicting physical harm on children.

Recommendation 13

The State party should ensure the effective implementation of its legislation criminalizing slavery and guarantee effective remedies for victims of slavery who have lodged complaints. The State party should also conduct investigations, effectively prosecute and sentence those responsible and provide compensation for, and rehabilitate the victims. Finally, the State party should expedite the hearing of pending cases; adopt and implement, as Government policy, the road map developed in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including their causes and their consequences; and raise the awareness of all law enforcement officers and the general population, including in rural areas.

126. In 2014, the Government adopted a road map for the eradication of contemporary forms of slavery. An interministerial committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, was established to implement the recommendations contained in the road map with support from a technical committee.

127. Under the action plan adopted for implementing the road map, the following key measures have been taken:

- Act No. 2015-031 on the criminalization of slavery, which superseded Act No. 2007-048, was passed into law. The adoption and implementation of the Act fulfil recommendations 1 to 6 of the road map.
- The prosecution service attached to the Supreme Court wrote to judges and criminal justice practitioners to remind them of the directives and guidance that form the nation's criminal justice policy with regard to the key aspects of the initiation of proceedings, in particular in the areas of financial crime, terrorism, slavery and slavery-like practices, torture and violations of human rights and freedoms.
- The prosecution service has placed particular emphasis on the processing of cases of slavery and slavery-like practices. The Attorney General has sent a memorandum to all State prosecutors urging them to actively prosecute cases of slavery and slavery-like practices.
- Decree No. 2016-002 of 2 January 2016 was adopted, establishing the location and geographical jurisdiction of the three specialized anti-slavery criminal courts.
- Act No. 2015-031 provides that all judicial decisions awarding compensation to victims of slavery are enforceable even if appeals have been lodged. In addition, criminal judges hearing cases involving slavery-like practices are required, subject to action for damages, to protect the rights of the victims. In other words, they must immediately order all necessary interim measures to safeguard the rights of the victims. The Act stipulates that victims of slavery are entitled to legal aid and are exempt from all legal fees and costs, which are covered by the State. Victims also receive protection against intimidation, threats or reprisals (judges are required to take these interim measures whenever a case involving slavery is brought before them).
- Each year, the National Day to Combat the Vestiges of Slavery is commemorated on 6 March, which is the date on which the consensus-based, participatory road map for the eradication of contemporary forms of slavery was adopted.

128. The judicial system of Mauritania provides a solid foundation for protecting victims of slavery against abuse and all forms of exploitation.

129. Judges play a pivotal role in this regard by ensuring that the rights of all parties are protected. Decisions are enforced in their entirety, even if that is sometimes on a provisional basis, for instance when a challenge or appeal is lodged.

130. Under this framework, human rights organizations can provide assistance to victims at all stages of proceedings and even draw attention to or report cases, file complaints or bring civil action in their own right.

131. The specialized courts are now operational and 35 cases have been referred to the competent courts since Act No. 2007-048 was first passed. Cases have culminated in settlements, dismissals, acquittals, convictions and awards of civil damages.

132. In terms of capacity-building, practitioners involved in combating slavery, such as judges, criminal investigation officers, lawyers, registrars and civil society actors, have received training in Act No. 2015-031.

133. Seminars have been organized in collaboration with the OHCHR country office and SOS Esclaves. More than 90 judges, registrars and criminal investigation officers from the police and gendarmerie have attended those events.

134. The National Human Rights Commission and the Commission for Human Rights and Humanitarian Action have also organized training and awareness-raising activities for various target audiences. Those activities have included the following:

- Campaigns to raise awareness of the unacceptability of slavery;
- Workshops for civil society organizations and the media on anti-slavery legislation;
- A fatwa on the illegitimacy of the practice of slavery, issued by the Association of Ulemas on 27 March 2015;
- A cash transfer programme — introduced by the Government as part of its poverty reduction efforts — to help defray school fees for school-age children who come from families that are poor or are suffering from effects of the legacy of slavery;
- An action plan to combat child labour;
- The development of school infrastructure, including schools and school canteens, in priority areas;
- Income-generating projects for persons affected by the legacy of slavery;
- The annual allocation of 2.8 billion Mauritanian ouguiyas (US$ 9.7 million) from the State budget for the implementation of programmes run by the Tadamoun National Agency for the Eradication of the Vestiges of Slavery, Social Integration and Poverty Alleviation.

135. This funding has enabled projects to be launched in the areas of education, vocational training, health, water supply, crop-raising, livestock-farming, fisheries, the environment, low-income housing and small-scale crafts and trades, especially in priority areas. In addition, the Agency is empowered to bring civil action in its own right in cases involving slavery.

Recommendation 14

The State party should bring the duration of police custody, including for terrorist offences, into line with the provisions of the Covenant. The State party should also revise its criminal legislation to guarantee, both de jure and de facto, the fundamental legal safeguards for persons deprived of their liberty, including:

(a) The right to be informed of the reasons for their arrest;

(b) Access to a lawyer or independent legal counsel or to legal aid;

(c) Access to a doctor and the possibility of informing a family member of the detention;

(d) The right to be brought before a judge without delay and to have the legality of their detention examined by a court;

(e) The State party should implement measures to improve the conditions of detention in its prisons and to reduce prison overcrowding.

136. Article 4 of the Act on Punishment of the Crimes of Slavery and Torture as Crimes against Humanity stipulates the fundamental safeguards that apply in situations of deprivation of liberty.

137. From the moment that a person is deprived of his or her liberty, a number of fundamental safeguards must be observed, including:

- The right to have a family member or other person of his or her choosing immediately informed of the detention and the place of detention;
- The right, at his or her request, to be examined by a physician upon admission, arrest or detention;
- The right to have access to a lawyer as from the moment of deprivation of liberty or access to assistance from a person of his or her choosing and prompt access to legal aid, where appropriate;
- The right to be brought before a judge without delay and to have the legality of the detention reviewed by a court in accordance with applicable legislation;
- The right to be informed, in a language that he or she understands, of the above-mentioned rights and of the possibility of requesting legal aid;
- The obligation of the detaining authority to keep up-to-date records containing the following information: the name, physical condition and state of health of the person deprived of his or her liberty; the date, time and reason for the deprivation of liberty; the name of the authority that deprived the person of liberty; the date and time of release or transfer to another place of detention; and the place to which he or she has been transferred and the authority overseeing the transfer.

138. Failure to respect these safeguards results in the imposition of disciplinary sanctions or criminal proceedings, as appropriate.

139. At the request of the Mauritanian authorities, the country's counter-terrorism legislation is currently being reviewed by the Executive Directorate of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Development Programme with the aim of adapting it to developments in terrorism and international legislation while ensuring respect for human rights.

140. The authorities rigorously monitor places of detention and are taking steps to improve detention conditions in prisons.

141. Each year, the State allocates a significant amount under its operating budget to prisoner nutrition. The allocation is slated to increase by nearly 15 per cent in 2018.

142. Inmates receive good-quality food that has the necessary nutritional value to maintain their health and strength. Three meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) are served each day to the entire prison population and the menu varies weekly. Special meals are prepared for prisoners who are ill, pregnant women, children and older persons.

143. All of the country's prisons are connected to the drinking water supply network and the power grid.

144. Personal hygiene and facility sanitation are provided for through the regular distribution of cleaning products and supplies (detergent, bleach, soap, insecticide, brooms, mops, scrapers etc.) in all prisons.

145. The bedding and kitchen equipment at all national prisons were replaced in 2016.

146. The larger facilities (Dar-Naim, Aleg, Nouadhibou and Bir Moghrein prisons, the central prison and the women's prison) are equipped with generators in order to ensure supply in the event of a power outage or failure of the national power grid.

147. Refrigerated chambers for storing perishable food items have been installed in Nouakchott and Aleg and another is being installed in Nouadhibou.

148. In terms of health care, all necessary medical treatment and specialized pharmaceutical products are provided free of charge to all inmates. Prisoners receive the same health-care services as are provided to the general public.

149. All prisons with capacity for 200 inmates have a fully equipped health unit and medical and auxiliary staff who provide around-the-clock services on site. Transfers to external health-care facilities are done using ambulances made available to the Nouakchott, Aleg and Bir Moghrein prisons.

150. Health care in smaller prisons is provided by military or civilian public health-care facilities depending on the jurisdiction.

151. The overall prison occupation rate stands at 100.6 per cent, although the rate at Dar-Naim and the central prison, both in Nouakchott, is 182.3 per cent and 142 per cent. The challenge with regard to prison overcrowding is more a matter of the prisons' geographic distribution than of their overall capacity.

152. The refurbishment of the Kaédi and Rosso prisons, the construction and opening of new facilities that are already operational (the second prison in Bir Moghrein and the women's prison in Nouakchott Sud) and the upcoming completion of other facilities (the centre for children in conflict with the law in Nouakchott Ouest and the prison in Nbeïka) will relieve pressure on the prisons in Nouakchott, which are the only ones faced with overcrowding.

153. To relieve pressure on the system and distribute prisoners in a more balanced manner across the various prisons, a total of 768 prisoners in 2016 and 434 prisoners in 2017 were transferred from Nouakchott to prisons having available space (Aleg, Nouadhibou and Bir Moghrein).

154. Inmates at prisons and reintegration centres are treated in such a manner as to promote their rehabilitation through pedagogical, educational and religious means, health services, vocational training, social services and sports, culture and leisure activities.

155. The prisons authority is working to create the conditions so that this goal can be achieved. A number of activities and reintegration workshops have been carried out in such areas as vocational training, improvement of one's living conditions and skills training (welding and metalworking, plumbing, building electrics, text processing and computer maintenance, brick-making, vegetable farming, plant nurseries, hairdressing, artisanal bread-making etc.).

156. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Traditional Teaching recently introduced civics and religious studies classes in prisons. The Department of Islamic Guidance now offers classes at the women's prison in Nouakchott.

157. Under the sentence adjustment arrangement, 147 prisoners, including 15 women, have received a presidential pardon or been released on parole since 2016.

158. The post-release follow-up for these individuals is carried out in part by the Ministry of Social Affairs, which has had responsibility since 2016 for overseeing the women who have benefited from sentence adjustment arrangements. The Commission for Human Rights and Humanitarian Action provided support and assistance for the reintegration of a group of young people who had benefited from similar measures.

159. Non-governmental partners, such as the Noura Foundation and Caritas-Mauritania, also provide post-release follow-up and finance income-generating activities for former inmates.

Recommendation 15

The State party should guarantee the independence of the judicial system and the transparency of its procedures, while providing it with the resources it needs to function. It should also include human rights education in the training of judges, magistrates and lawyers. Lastly, the State party should make available the necessary means to ensure, both in law and in practice, that defendants are guaranteed all the rights provided for in article 14 of the Covenant.

160. The Constitution guarantees the separation of powers and the independence of the judiciary.

161. The judiciary is independent from the legislative and executive branches. The President of the Republic, in collaboration with the Supreme Council of Justice, which he chairs, is the guarantor of this independence (Constitution, art. 89).

162. The organization of the judiciary is set out in a basic law that establishes the composition, functioning and powers of the Supreme Council of Justice.

163. In the exercise of their functions, judges are subject only to the law. They are immune from any kind of pressure that might impede their free will.

164. The independence of judges is protected through the principle of security of tenure enshrined in article 8, which stipulates that judges cannot be removed and they can be reassigned only at their own request or as the result of a disciplinary sanction or an imperative of service on the advice of the Supreme Council of Justice.

165. The close oversight of the profession by the Supreme Council of Justice, which is made up of judges elected by their peers, and the fact that judges are subject only to the law when discharging their functions further ensures their independence.

166. Although all judges come under the Ministry of Justice for administrative purposes, their appointment to the various posts in the judiciary is done solely on the basis of their category and their seniority within that category.

167. The right to a fair trial is enshrined in the Constitution of 1991, specifically in article 13, which reads:

> All persons are presumed innocent until proven guilty by a lawfully established court. No one may be prosecuted, arrested, detained or punished except as in the cases defined and the manner prescribed by law.

168. Article 7 of Ordinance No. 2007-012 of 8 February 2007 on the organization of the administration of justice establishes that:

> No one may be tried without being given a fair opportunity to present their defence. Defence and the choice of defence counsel are free. Lawyers have free access to all courts. No one may be brought before any but their natural judges. Only courts established in accordance with the law may hand down sentences.

169. Legal aid may be granted to parties who can demonstrate indigence in accordance with Act No. 2015-030 of 10 September 2015. Aid is provided in all types of cases to any complainant or defendant at any stage of proceedings. Legal aid offices were set up by order of the Ministry of Justice.

Recommendation 16

The State party should remove the crime of apostasy from its legislation and authorize Mauritanians to fully enjoy their freedom of religion, including by changing religion.

170. Mauritania is an Islamic republic and, as such, all its citizens are Muslim. Islam is the religion of the people and the State in accordance with article 5 of the Constitution. Foreign nationals may practise their faith other than Islam in keeping with the laws and regulations in force.

Recommendation 17

The State party should adopt a new Act governing the exercise of the freedom of association that complies with international standards and provides the necessary protection for human rights defenders. The State party should, furthermore, take specific measures to ensure the protection of members of NGOs against any retaliation and the protection of peaceful demonstrations organized on its territory; in the case of violations, it should conduct investigations with a view to the prosecution of those responsible.

171. At present, associations receive authorization to operate from the Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization in accordance with the Associations Act, No. 064-098 of 9 June 1964.

172. Associations that wish to be recognized apply by submitting a copy of the minutes of the general meeting of members at which the association was established, together with a copy of their by-laws and rules of procedure.

173. The application is submitted to the administrative authorities responsible for the area in which the association's main offices are located.

174. A character check is conducted, following which the application is forwarded to the competent authority for approval. The members of recognized organizations enjoy the protection of the law and may engage in their activity freely, without constraint or intimidation.

175. New draft legislation on associations has been prepared and has been submitted for adoption.

Recommendation 18

The State party should ensure the strict application of its legislation banning early marriages. It should carry out campaigns to publicize the legislation and inform girls, their parents and community leaders of the harmful effects of early marriage.

176. The 2001 Personal Status Code sets the legal age for marriage at 18 years.

177. In 2014, the Government launched a two-year, nationwide campaign within the framework of the Africa-wide campaign against child marriage.

178. In this connection, the Government set up a multisectoral committee composed of representatives of the relevant ministries, national NGOs and the United Nations (UNICEF and UNFPA). The committee has drawn up an action plan for the campaign against child marriage.

179. Under the action plan, the Children's Directorate of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and the Family, in collaboration with UNICEF, UNFPA and the core members of the committee (gynaecologist, sociologist, legal adviser), has periodically organized the activities described below.

180. On the occasion of the commemorative activities held on 20 November 2014, the Government:

- Launched the national campaign against child marriage under the supervision of the Minister of Social Affairs, Children and the Family, the representative of UNFPA and the deputy representative of UNICEF and subsequently organized an awareness-raising campaign on children's rights in all the departments of Brakna Governorate;
- Provided training in combating child marriage to the members of the Brakna regional child protection board;
- Organized and sponsored radio and television programmes on the consequences of child marriage;
- Introduced the topic of child marriage into the child protection board's programme of work and prepared a regional action plan to combat child marriage in Brakna.

181. On the occasion of the commemorative events held on 16 June 2015, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and the Family:

- Prepared key messages on combating child marriage;
- Provided training on these key messages to 80 representatives of youth groups, early childhood education professionals, the Children's Parliament, women's cooperatives, NGOs and grass-roots organizations working in the field of child protection; all the representatives took part in the travelling exhibit on the consequences of child marriage and committed to continue raising awareness of the issue;

- Organized a travelling exhibit on the consequences of child marriage and child labour in five governorates (Gorgol, Guidimagha, Nouakchott Ouest, Nouakchott Sud and Nouakchott Nord);
- Organized and sponsored a number of radio and television programmes on the consequences of child marriage.

182. On the occasion of the commemorative activities held on 20 November 2015, the department:

- Held a training workshop on this issue for journalists, NGOs working in the field of child protection, members of the Children's Parliament, women's cooperatives and youth groups in Dakhlet Nouadhibou Governorate;
- Raised awareness of the consequences of child marriage in the city of Nouadhibou;
- Sponsored the participation of members of the National Committee to Combat Child Marriage in radio and television programmes on the consequences of child marriage;
- Developed communication aids on the issue (Breinissa sketches).

183. In addition, Mauritania has recently become involved with the Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend project. Several of the project's focus areas, such as school enrolment and empowerment of girls and economic support for women, will help to significantly reduce child marriage.

184. In terms of legislation, two bills banning child marriage have been endorsed by the Government and submitted to the parliament for adoption, namely the General Children's Code and the framework law on combating violence against women and girls.

Recommendation 19

The State party should speed up the adoption of the asylum bill in order to facilitate asylum application procedures. It should also consider the situation of former refugees and asylum seekers with a view to providing them with identity documents, where appropriate, and allowing them to move about more easily. The State party should remove the legal obstacles to the registration of births of children of refugees and asylum seekers born in Mauritania. Finally, it should make it easier for refugees repatriated under the tripartite agreement between the State party, Senegal and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to obtain identity documents, and consider signing a similar agreement to cover Mauritanian refugees in Mali following the events of 1989–1990. It should consider establishing a mechanism to address the humanitarian consequences of those events.

185. Thanks to the biometric census, migrant workers and members of their families have been able to regularize their situation by becoming registered, with the assistance of their diplomatic or consular offices and their associations. Registration is permanent and allows migrants, of whom there are now 114,425 according to the Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization, to regularize their situation.

186. The country's biometric civil register includes a special register for foreigners, who are able to register the birth of their children. In addition, the parents are issued with residence permits. Children born in Mauritania of migrant parents may apply for naturalization on attaining adulthood.

187. Children of migrant workers are admitted to public schools according to their level and free of charge. They receive their education under the same conditions as Mauritanian children. They may sit all national public examinations, and those who graduate from secondary school may enter university and undertake a course of academic study chosen according to their wishes and qualifications.

188. Resolving the pending humanitarian issues is one of the Government's main concerns.

189. In this connection, 24,536 Mauritanian refugees in Senegal, comprising 5,817 families, were able to return voluntarily in a dignified and organized manner to 118 locations across five governorates.

190. The organized return of Mauritanian refugees from Senegal was the result of a tripartite agreement signed on 12 November 2007 between Mauritania, Senegal and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The agreement is based on principles of humanitarian law regarding voluntary repatriation and the preservation of family unity in conditions that respect human dignity. Under the terms of the agreement, Mauritania is responsible for guaranteeing the security and dignity of returnees and ensuring that they are reintegrated into the country's economic and social fabric.

191. The State has put arrangements in place to ensure the voluntary and organized repatriation of these refugees as well as their economic and social reintegration. In 2008, it set up the National Agency for Refugee Assistance and Reintegration to manage the return and reintegration of returnees.

192. The central and local governments have also been mobilized in this process, playing a key role in helping returnees to become property-owners or homeowners or to set themselves up as farmers by resolving any disputes that might have arisen.

193. In addition, the Government established a national commission to draw up a register of public employees and State contract workers affected by the events of 1989. The commission has compiled a list of all the public employees and State contract workers concerned, in Mauritania and abroad, with a view to helping them find employment. Some 1,159 public employees and State contract workers have had their rights reinstated under arrangements put forward by the commission and agreed to by representatives of the persons in question.

194. The consultation process begun in 2008 between the authorities and rights holders led to the resolution of the pending humanitarian issues in accordance with Mauritanian law, Islamic values and international conventions and treaties. The settlement involved the award of compensation (*diya*) to rights holders and the invocation by the Government of the duty of memory and forgiveness on the occasion of the Day of National Reconciliation, celebrated on 25 March 2009 in Kaédi (prayer in memory of the victims and speech by the President of the Republic).

Recommendation 20: Dissemination of the Covenant

195. Several seminars and workshops on the provisions of the Covenant and the Committee's recommendations have been organized at the national level for judges, justice officials, law enforcement personnel and civil society organizations.

Recommendation 21: Consultations with civil society on the periodic report

196. The Government's reports to treaty bodies and to the Human Rights Council in connection with the universal periodic review are validated taking into consideration the recommendations stemming from consultation and information-sharing workshops with civil society and parliamentary bodies.

Conclusion

197. The Islamic Republic of Mauritania wishes to express, through the submission of its periodic report on the implementation of the Covenant and the Committee's recommendations, its firm commitment to fulfilling the treaty obligations it undertook as part of the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

198. Mauritania reaffirms its attachment to the ideals and principles enshrined in the Covenant and remains open to pursuing constructive dialogue with the Committee with a view to ensuring that the rights laid down in this key international legal instrument are enjoyed in practice.